

III. SOIL CONDITIONING INDEX

The Soil Conditioning Index is a tool used to predict the consequences of management actions on soil quality, specifically on the organic matter content of soils under cultivation. The Index is used in the Conservation Crop Rotation practice standard (Practice Code No. 328) to determine whether or not general criteria are being met. As stated in the standard, “When sheet and rill erosion and wind erosion are not existing or potential problems, the crop rotation shall show a positive balance for the sum of all years when evaluated using the current Soil Conditioning Index Procedure.” A neutral or favorable rating indicates that the productivity of the soil resource is being maintained or improved.

Instructions and guidance on the use of the Soil Conditioning Index are found in the *USDA, NRCS National Agronomy Manual (190-V-NAM, 3rd Ed., June 2000), Part 508C, Soil Management*. Precedents for this predictive tool are found in the *USDA, NRCS West NTC Conservation Agronomy Technical Note No. 27, Soil Conditioning Rating Indices for Major Irrigated and Non-Irrigated Crops grown in the Western United States (1964)*.